



A New Pedestrian Bridge at Fort Larned National Historic Site

The Fort Larned National Historic Site sits seven miles to the west of Larned, Kansas. Both the Fort and the town were named to honor Colonel Benjamin F. Larned, the paymaster general of the U.S. Army at the time the Fort was established in 1859.

The Fort was constructed to act as protection for users of the Santa Fe Trail, at the time a vital transportation and commercial trading route. The Santa Fe Trail branched into the “Wet” and “Dry” routes in the vicinity of the Fort. The Trail was first used in 1821; in the 1840s and ‘50s raids by Native Americans increased along the



Trail, which led to the establishment of the Fort. Soldiers patrolled the Santa Fe Trail up to 70 miles in each direction from Fort Larned.

The Fort was used for approximately 19 years. When the railroad pushed west through central Kansas in the 1870s, traffic along the Santa Fe Trail fell off appreciably, and Fort Larned was decommissioned. The property

became a private ranch for approximately 80 years. In 1964 it became a unit of the National Park Service.

Replacing A Concrete Bridge

While the property was in private hands, the local county built a concrete bridge across the Pawnee River and into the property to provide access to the ranch. After the property became an NPS unit, this bridge provided pedestrian access into the historic core of the Fort, and vehicle access for those requiring accessible parking.



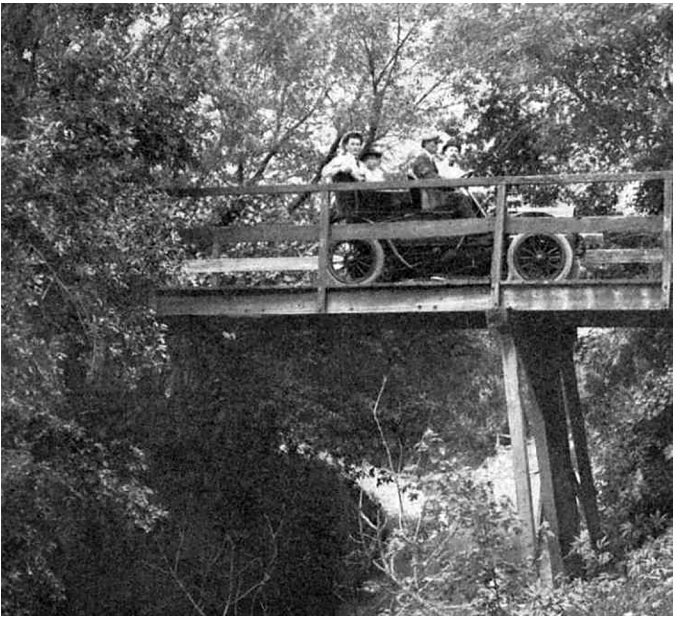
The Old Concrete Bridge at Fort Larned

The removal of the bridge and replacement with an appropriate pedestrian bridge near the location of a historic bridge crossing the Pawnee River was a goal of the Park from the time the Fort property became an NPS unit. The concrete bridge had deteriorated substantially to the point where it required complete replacement of the concrete deck and other structural repairs.

During the research of the history of Fort Larned, a photograph was found of an earlier bridge with a car on it (see next page). The new bridge was designed to resemble that historic bridge.

“The new bridge is visually compatible with an earlier historic bridge at this site.”

The project included the demolition of the existing bridge and a gravel parking area, and the addition of



A photograph of the historic bridge used as a model for the new pedestrian bridge at Fort Larned

paved, accessible parking. The entrance road to the Fort was also extended by several hundred feet.

“This project was successful on at least three levels,” said Wayne Vander Tuin, who worked on the design phase of the project. “First, we replaced a structurally deficient bridge. Second, we removed a modern highway bridge from a historic scene. And third, the new pedestrian bridge provides visitor access to the Fort, and is visually compatible with an earlier historic bridge at this site.”



Fort Larned’s new Pedestrian Bridge